



FLWEMS Paramedic Medication Information For:  
**ACTIVATED CHARCOAL with SORBITAL**  
(Actidose)

Some commonly used brand names are:

**In the U.S.—**

- Actidose-Aqua <sup>1</sup>
- Actidose with Sorbitol <sup>2</sup>
- CharcoAid <sup>2</sup>
- CharcoAid G <sup>1</sup>
- CharcoAid 2000 <sup>1</sup>
- Insta-Char in an Aqueous Base <sup>1</sup>
- Insta-Char in an Aqueous Base with Cherry Flavor <sup>1</sup>
- Insta-Char Pediatric in an Aqueous Base with Cherry Flavor <sup>1</sup>
- Insta-Char Pediatric with Cherry Flavor in a Sorbitol Base <sup>2</sup>
- Insta-Char with Cherry Flavor in a Sorbitol Base <sup>2</sup>
- Liqui-Char <sup>1</sup>
- Liqui-Char with Sorbitol <sup>2</sup>

**In Canada—**

- Aqueous Charcodote <sup>1</sup>
- Aqueous Pediatric Charcodote <sup>1</sup>
- Charcodote <sup>2</sup>
- Charcodote TFS-25 <sup>2</sup>
- Charcodote TFS-50 <sup>2</sup>
- Pediatric Charcodote <sup>2</sup>

**Note:** For quick reference, the following medicines are numbered to match the corresponding brand names.

This information applies to the following medicines:

1. Activated Charcoal (AK-ti-vay-ted CHAR-kole)<sup>‡§</sup>
2. Activated Charcoal and Sorbitol (AK-ti-vay-ted CHAR-kole and SOR-bi-tole)

<sup>‡</sup> Generic name product may be available in the U.S.

<sup>§</sup> Generic name product may be available in Canada

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**Category**

- **Antidote, adsorbent**—Charcoal, Activated
  - **Antidote, adsorbent-laxative**—Charcoal, Activated and Sorbitol
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**Description**

Activated charcoal is used in the emergency treatment of certain kinds of poisoning. It helps prevent the poison from being absorbed from the stomach into the body. Sometimes, several doses of activated charcoal are needed to treat severe poisoning. Ordinarily, this medicine is not effective and should not be used in poisoning if corrosive agents such as alkalis (lye) and strong acids, iron, boric acid, lithium, petroleum products (e.g., cleaning fluid, coal oil, fuel oil, gasoline, kerosene, paint thinner), or alcohols have been swallowed, since it will not prevent these poisons from being absorbed into the body.

Some activated charcoal products contain sorbitol. Sorbitol is a sweetener. It also works as a laxative, for the elimination of the poison from the body. *Products that contain sorbitol should be given only under the direct supervision of a doctor because severe diarrhea and vomiting may result.*

Activated charcoal has not been shown to be effective in relieving diarrhea and intestinal gas.

Activated charcoal may be available without a doctor's prescription; however, before using this medicine, call a poison control center, your doctor, or an emergency room for advice. Activated charcoal is available in the following dosage forms:

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*Oral*

- Activated Charcoal
    - Powder (U.S. and Canada)
    - Oral suspension (U.S. and Canada)
  - Activated Charcoal and Sorbitol
    - Oral suspension (U.S. and Canada)
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**Before Using This Medicine**

In deciding to use a medicine, the risks of taking the medicine must be weighed against the good it will do. This is a decision you and your doctor will make. For activated charcoal, the following should be considered:

**Allergies**—Tell your doctor if you have ever had any unusual or allergic reaction to activated charcoal or to fructose (fruit sugar). Also tell your health care professional if you are allergic to any other substances, such as foods, preservatives, or dyes.

**Pregnancy**—Activated charcoal has not been reported to cause birth defects or other problems in humans.

**Breast-feeding**—Activated charcoal has not been reported to cause problems in nursing babies.

**Children**—Activated charcoal should be used only under the direct supervision of your doctor, poison control center, or other health care professional.

**Older adults**—Many medicines have not been studied specifically in older people. Therefore, it may not be known whether they work exactly the same way they do in younger adults. Although there is no specific information comparing the use of activated charcoal in the elderly, this medicine is not expected to cause different side effects or problems in older people than it does in younger adults. However, elderly persons with slow digestion are more likely to develop constipation if given more than one dose of activated charcoal.

**Other medicines**—Although certain medicines should not be used together at all, in other cases two different medicines may be used together even if an interaction might occur. In these cases, your doctor may want to change the dose, or other precautions may be necessary. Tell your health care professional if you are taking any other prescription or nonprescription (over-the-counter [OTC]) medicine.

**Other medical problems**—The presence of other medical problems may affect the use of activated charcoal. Make sure you tell your doctor if you have any other medical problems, especially:

- Bleeding, intestinal or
  - Blockage, intestinal or
  - Hole in the intestine—Activated charcoal may make these conditions worse
  - Decreased alertness—To prevent activated charcoal from getting into the patient's lungs, it may be necessary to place a tube in the patient's throat before activated charcoal is given
  - Dehydration—Use of laxatives, such as sorbitol, is not recommended
  - Slow digestion—Activated charcoal may not work properly
  - Surgery, recent—Activated charcoal may cause abdominal or stomach problems
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**Proper Use of This Medicine**

*Before taking this medicine, call a poison control center, your doctor, or an emergency room for advice . It is a good idea to have these telephone numbers readily available.*

To prevent activated charcoal powder from scattering, be careful when opening and adding water to the powder container.

*It is very important that you shake the liquid form of this medicine well before taking it, because some might have settled in the bottom . Be sure to drink all the liquid. Then rinse the container with a small amount of water, shake the container, and drink this mixture to get the full dose of activated charcoal.*

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If you have been told to take both this medicine and ipecac syrup to treat the poisoning, *do not take this medicine until after you have taken the ipecac syrup to cause vomiting and the vomiting has stopped. This usually takes about 30 minutes.*

Do not take this medicine mixed with chocolate syrup, ice cream or sherbet, since they may prevent the medicine from working properly.

*If you are taking any other medicine, do not take it within 2 hours of the activated charcoal.* Taking other medicines together with activated charcoal may prevent the other medicine from being absorbed by your body. If you have any questions about this, check with your health care professional.

**Dosing**—The dose of these medicines will be different for different patients. *Follow your doctor's, poison control center's, or other health care professional's orders or the directions on the label.* The following information includes only the average doses of these medicines. *If your dose is different, do not change it unless your doctor tells you to do so.*

*For activated charcoal*

- For *oral* dosage form (powder):
  - For treatment of poisoning:
    - Treatment with one dose:
      - Adults and teenagers: Dose is usually 25 to 100 grams mixed with water.
      - Children 1 through 12 years of age: Dose is usually 25 to 50 grams mixed with water, or the dose may be based on body weight. It may be 0.5 to 1 gram per kilogram (kg) (0.23 to 0.45 gram per pound) of body weight mixed with water.
      - Children up to 1 year of age: Dose is usually 10 to 25 grams mixed with water, or the dose may be based on body weight. It may be 0.5 to 1 gram per kg (0.23 to 0.45 gram per pound) of body weight mixed with water.
    - Treatment with more than one dose:
      - Adults and teenagers: At first, the dose is 50 to 100 grams. Then the dose may be 12.5 grams given every hour, 25 grams given every two hours, or 50 grams given every four hours. Each dose should be mixed with water.
      - Children up to 13 years of age: At first, the dose is 10 to 25 grams. Then the dose is based on body weight. It is usually 1 to 2 grams per kg (0.45 to 0.91 gram per pound) of body weight given every two to four hours. Each dose should be mixed with water.
  - For treatment of poisoning:
    - Treatment with one dose:
      - Adults and teenagers: Dose is usually 25 to 100 grams.
      - Children 1 through 12 years of age: Dose is usually 25 to 50 grams, or the dose may be based on body weight. It may be 0.5 to 1 gram per kg (0.23 to 0.45 gram per pound) of body weight.
      - Children up to 1 year of age: Dose is usually 10 to 25 grams, or the dose may be based on body weight. It may be 0.5 to 1 gram per kg (0.23 to 0.45 gram per pound) of body weight.
    - Treatment with more than one dose:
      - Adults and teenagers: At first, the dose is 50 to 100 grams. Then the dose may be 12.5 grams given every hour, 25 grams given every two hours, or 50 grams given every four hours.
      - Children up to 13 years of age: At first, the dose is 10 to 25 grams. Then the dose is based on body weight. It is usually 1 to 2 grams per kg (0.45 to 0.91 gram per pound) of body weight given every two to four hours.

*For activated charcoal and sorbitol*

- For *oral* dosage form (oral suspension):
  - For treatment of poisoning:
    - Adults and teenagers—Dose is usually 50 to 100 grams of activated charcoal given one time.
    - Children 1 through 12 years of age—Dose is usually 25 to 50 grams of activated charcoal given one time.
    - Children up to 1 year of age—Use is not recommended.

**Storage**—To store this medicine:

- Keep out of the reach of children.
- Store away from heat and direct light.

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- Do not store this medicine in the bathroom, near the kitchen sink, or in other damp places. Heat or moisture may cause the medicine to break down.
  - Keep the liquid form of this medicine from freezing.
  - Do not keep outdated medicine or medicine no longer needed. Be sure that any discarded medicine is out of the reach of children.
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**Side Effects of This Medicine**

Along with its needed effects, a medicine may cause some unwanted effects. Although not all of these side effects may occur, if they do occur they may need medical attention.

Check with your doctor as soon as possible if the following side effect occurs:

*Less common or rare*

Pain or swelling in stomach

Other side effects may occur that usually do not need medical attention. These side effects may go away during treatment as your body adjusts to the medicine. However, check with your doctor if any of the following side effects continue:

*More common*

Diarrhea

*Less common or rare*

Constipation; vomiting

Activated charcoal will cause your stools to turn black. This is to be expected while you are taking this medicine.

**END OF INFORMATION – NOTHING FOLLOWS**